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Oct. 6th.

MR. VAUX, Vice-President, in the Chair.

Twenty-two members present.

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Oct. 13th.

MR. VAUX, Vice-President, in the Chair.

Twenty-six members present.

Mr. Aubrey H. Smith stated that recently, in company with Dr. Leidy and Mr. Charles E. Smith, he had found in a grove, in New Jersey, about four miles out on the Camden and Atlantic Railroad, a well grown, and perfect specimen of *Quercus heterophylla*. He also remarked that previously, in company with Dr. George Smith, he had noticed a tree of the same kind, though not quite so well marked, in Tinicum, Delaware Co., Pa.

Mr. Durand made a communication, which was ordered to be published, as follows:

When false views pertaining to one of the branches of the natural sciences are spread before the public, either in good faith or with a view to speculation, I consider it to be the duty of an institution like ours to interfere, and bring the weight of its influence to counteract the diffusion of an error.

A printed circular has been issued, emanating from a chartered company, entitled "American Tea Company," and purporting to be an announcement that the *Chinese Tea-plant*, or a variety of it, has been found growing indigenous in the mountainous districts of Pennsylvania.

In this circular, which appears to be the programme of the originators of the American Tea Company, these gentlemen declare that, "upon a thorough investigation of the subject, they could not withhold their entire conviction that this discovery of the Tea-plant, growing indigenously upon our own soil, hardy, vigorous, and with a leaf of superior excellence, was not only a fact, but look upon it as one of the most surprising bestowments ever vouchsafed by Almighty God to the people of the United States!"

This solemn assertion is countenanced by the following declaration of a gentleman who, for about six years, held the responsible position of superintendent and chief manager of the lands, in India, of the Assam Tea Company of London and Calcutta. The following are his words:

"Having been engaged, for several years, in the culture and manufacture of tea, in the Valley of Assam, situated to the west of the province of Yunnau, one of the principal tea-growing districts of China, I wrote an article on the subject, which was published in the Agricultural Report of the U. S. Patent Office for the year 1860. Since that time, several enterprising gentlemen, discovering that the Tea-plant was indigenous to this country and growing in wild profusion in the mountainous regions of Pennsylvania, called my attention to the subject. At first I had some doubts as to the fact of its existence in this climate; but having been shown an excellent engraving of the plant and some specimens of the dried leaves, I became convinced of its truth, and, on proceeding to the locality indicated, I found that my hopes and expectations were more than realized. *The existence of the Tea-plant in Pennsylvania is a fact!* It grows indigenously, in the greatest luxuriance and abundance, in the places that I have visited, limited, however, to those localities which afford the peculiar soil indispensable to it, as it is the case in China, Assam and Japan."

1863.]

(The plate accompanying the circular is inscribed, "The Tea-plant of North America—Chinese Chah, Assamese Phalop—*Thea viridis*, Linn.")

There is no equivocation whatever in the preceding paragraphs, nor in the inscription of the plate! The originators of the American Tea Company proclaim to the people of the United States "that they have discovered the Chinese Tea-plant,—*Thea viridis*,—growing indigenous, in the greatest luxuriance and abundance, in the mountainous districts of Pennsylvania."

This is a gross error, which, as a botanist and one acquainted with the mountainous districts of Pennsylvania, I now desire to correct. *That the true Tea-plant, Thea viridis, or any of its varieties, have ever been detected growing indigenously in the mountains of Pennsylvania, I deny most emphatically!* and I challenge the gentlemen of the American Tea Company to prove the fact which they announce as one of the most surprising bestowments ever vouchsafed by Almighty God to the people of the United States.

Could it be possible that a plant so well known under cultivation in our hot-houses should have escaped the sagacity and experience of such active and eminent botanists as Michaux, Pursh, Muhlenberg, Schweinitz, Nuttall, Pickering, Porter, and a host of excellent Pennsylvania botanists, who have explored every nook and corner of our mountain forests, without ever finding a single plant of the *Thea viridis*, which the originators of the American Tea Company boldly assert to have found growing indigenous, hardy, vigorous and abundant, almost at our doors?

By this emphatic declaration of mine, I have no intention to impeach the good faith of these gentlemen; they have been mistaken, no doubt, and my object, as a botanist, is to correct a misrepresentation which might lead credulous persons into serious miscalculations. No botanist will ever look at the figures of the plate accompanying the circular, or take the trouble to steep in boiling water and unfold the leaves of the American tea, without easily recognizing those of a small shrub,—*Ceanothus Americanus*,—very common in our woods, and popularly known by the name of *Jersey tea*, under which it was used during the Revolutionary War,—not as genuine Chinese tea, however, but as a substitute for it, when the latter could not be easily procured.

Had the figures of the plate of the American Tea Company been provided with flowers and fruit, as they ought to have been, in order to characterize the plant, the gross error of these gentlemen would have been more glaring. Instead of the large, solitary, or geminate flowers of the Chinese tea-plant, they would have exhibited cymose fascicles of numerous very small flowers, supported on a common peduncle much longer than the leaves.

I now submit to your inspection dry and green specimens of different forms of *Thea viridis*, with figures of the same plant, that they may be compared with specimens of *Ceanothus Americanus*, the plant which I have every reason to consider as that which is represented in the plate of the American Tea Company. I will also show you leaves and fragments of leaves of both Chinese and American teas, that have been steeped in boiling water, and afterwards unfolded and pasted separately upon paper. You will here easily distinguish the peculiar and invariable characters of the leaves of each of these plants, so different from each other.

The Chinese plant, as well as its varieties, is a shrub from three to six feet high, and sometimes higher, which belongs to the *Camellia* family. It is distinguished by large polyandrous flowers, solitary or geminate in the axils of the leaves; sepals from five to six; petals five, six, and rarely as many as nine, slightly united at the base; stamens numerous and monadelphous; three united styles; capsule three-celled. The leaves are persistent, oval or narrow-lanceolate, feather-veined, strongly serrate, and attenuated at the base.

The Jersey-Tea plant is an undershrub of the order *Rhamnaceae*, scarcely more than two feet high, with very small perigynous flowers in cymose fascicles; sepals and petals five-parted; stamens five; one style and a three-lobed dry

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drupe. The leaves are ovate or oblong-ovate, broad and rounded at the base, sometimes almost subcordate, finely serrate, and three-ribbed.

Extracts from the essay on Tea Culture, by the author of the fifth paragraph above, have been introduced into the circular of the American Tea Company; the first of which is worded in the following manner:

"The Tea-plant is thus described by botanists:

"*Thea viridis*, Linn., *Camellia theifera*, Griff., Chinese *Chah*, Assamese *Phalop*.

"The ordinary height of the cultivated plant is from three to six feet."

This concise and very curious botanical description was, it appears, just enough for the present purpose. Had the more detailed account of the plant, given three years ago in the essay on Tea-culture, been reproduced in full, more information would perhaps have been given than was intended.

The second extract runs thus: "Botanically considered, the Tea-plant is a single species; the Green and the Black, with all the diversities of each, being mere varieties produced by a difference in culture, qualities of the soil, age of crops, &c." Evidently this extract is the corollary of one of the paragraphs of the circular, in which the same author insinuates that, "although the character of the American Tea-plant differs somewhat from the Chinese variety, it is not greater than might be expected from the difference of climate and soil of the two countries."

I will inform the gentleman that difference of climate and soil, and even difference of hemisphere, (although occasionally producing slight changes,) will never transform a plant of the *Camellia* tribe into one of the Buckthorn family. Referring to the leaf alone, "which," he says, "is the important part, and almost identical with some of the varieties from which the best Assam tea is made," I will add that, far from being almost identical, they are very different; the leaf of our *Ceanothus* being deciduous, of a thin texture, more or less pubescent, strongly three-nerved, and rounded at the base; whilst in all the varieties of *Thea viridis* the leaf is thick, coriaceous, persistent, quite glabrous, with a single feather-veined rib, and attenuated at the base. I must confess that the remark of an almost identity of the leaves of our plant with those of the Chinese Tea-plant, had induced me for a moment to suspect that the species *Ceanothus Asiaticus*, a plant indigenous to south-eastern Asia, and very similar to our *Ceanothus*, was also used in Assam as an auxiliary, if not a substitute, to *Thea viridis*.

I have now done with the subject. My purpose was merely to discuss the botanical value of the assertion of the originators of the American Tea Company, viz.: that the tea which they intend to offer to the public, was derived from the "true Chinese Tea-plant, growing indigenously, luxuriantly, and abundantly in our mountains," invisible, so far, to our numerous and active botanists. I trust that I have convinced you of the fallacy of this assertion.

I leave it now to the chemist to test the identity of chemical composition of this American tea with the Chinese *Chah*, and ascertain whether the former contains tannin, gluten, and thein, three of the principles which characterize *Thea viridis*.

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Oct. 20th.

Mr. VAUX, Vice-President, in the Chair.

Twenty members present.

The following were presented for publication:

"Description of a new species of *Pleurocera*," "Description of two new Mexican Land Shells," and "Description of a new *Teredo*." By George W. Tryon, Jr.

1863.]